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ABSTRACT

For a project designed to increase understanding of cultural diversity in the United States as a preliminary to meeting the educational needs of all the country's children, 42 professionals and parents were asked to identify the critical issues in the education of children from minority backgrounds. Over 200 issues were identified in 8 areas: (1) administration and policy; (2) attitudes and bias; (3) training and personnel; (4) curriculum and instruction; (5) assessment; (6) society and community; (7) parents and families; and (8) funding. Selected issues raised by respondents indicated that, among other problems: (1) school organization is not effective in dealing with diversity; (2) the current educational system has a mainstream bias which adversely affects minority students; (3) educators are not receiving appropriate training in this area and teacher educators also lack the needed knowledge and skills; (4) current instruction, curricula, materials/methods and service delivery models are inadequate; (5) inadequate assessment has led to overrepresentation or underrepresentation of minority students in various educational programs; (6) increased collaboration within the community is needed; (7) parental involvement needs to be encouraged and increased; and (8) funding for all schools should be equalized. All the issues identified are listed in the report under the eight categories. Concluding sections offer additional thoughts, a description of the data collection process, a directory of the respondents, and a listing of respondents by the ethnic groups with which they are concerned. Appendixes provide diversity data by state and the forms used in the survey. (24 references) (DB)

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EXPLORING EDUCATION ISSUES OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Developed by the
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Lexington, Kentucky

May 24, 1991

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EIGHT CRITICAL AREAS

- Administration and Policy
- Attitudes and Bias
- Training and Personnel
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Assessment
- Society and Community
- Parents and Families
- Funding

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An understanding and appreciation of this nation's cultural diversity is absolutely necessary in the design of research and development of policy if we are to meet the educational needs of all children. With this in mind, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), United States Department of Education, initiated an effort to identify critical issues that must be addressed in order to provide a free appropriate public education for children from minority backgrounds. To implement this initiative, the Federal Regional Resource Center (FRRC) contacted parents and professionals with appropriate knowledge and experience and asked them to identify the critical issues facing the educational system. It is anticipated that this project will assist OSEP in setting future priorities for action.

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Summary of issues by area

As a major step in the project, all respondents were asked to identify critical issues that must be addressed to provide a free appropriate public education to children and youth from diverse backgrounds. Over 200 critical issues were reported. Serious and complex problems were identified and observations made. Many of the observations are profound and demand immediate attention at the federal, state and local government/institution levels. While other issues will require the energy of individuals. The issues, in many cases, apply directly to the field of special education others are focused on the larger context of regular education. Responses were grouped into areas and are summarized below.

Following the summary is an item-by-item listing of all the issues generated; with some issues repeated in more that one category. Since the exact language used by contributors was considered crucial to an accurate portrayal of points of view, responses appear as statements of need, problems and solutions, phrases or quotes from other sources. No attempt was made to force uniformity.

Administration and Policy

The organization of schools is not effective in dealing with any type of diversity, and there is insufficient collaboration and cooperation with public and private agencies. Though restructuring efforts are attempting to address school problems, appropriate educational services for children from diverse backgrounds are not always considered in the new educational structures. In addition, current educational policies do not ensure that all students have the opportunity to receive an appropriate public education.

Attitudes and Bias

The current educational system has a mainstream cultural bias which adversely affects the education of students from minority backgrounds. This bias is manifested in preconceived expectations about children from diverse cultures that are limiting and inaccurate. In addition, lack of awareness, sensitivity and understanding of diverse cultures by school personnel interfere with the education of students and the development of productive relationships with parents.

Training and Personnel

Personnel, staffing and training issues identified include the belief that the existing personnel preparation programs, both preservice and inservice, are not adequate to train personnel to meet the educational needs of a culturally diverse population. This is a pervasive problem since not only are school personnel inadequately prepared, but many professors at institutions of higher education lack these same skills and knowledge. Besides the training issues, the educational system has not developed or attracted sufficient numbers of personnel from minority backgrounds to fill positions at all levels of the system from paraprofessional to national administrative positions.

Curriculum and Instruction

In general, the current instruction, curricula, materials/methods and service delivery models are inadequate for meeting the educational needs of children from minority backgrounds. Insufficient research is being focused on the development of new methods and models or testing the applicability of existing instructional techniques.

Assessment

Existing methods are not adequate to correctly assess/identify students from diverse backgrounds and determine appropriate educational services. Therefore, there is an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of students from minority backgrounds in various educational programs.

Society and Community

This area includes such issues as the complex problems associated with educating a diverse student population; problems that cannot be solved by schools alone. There is a need to involve the private and public sector in developing solutions to societal and community problems. The solution to these greater challenges lies in efforts of collaboration and cooperation within the community and among agencies, not in isolated services.

Parents and Families

This area includes the perception that the current organization of the educational system does not promote the active involvement of all parents in determining the educational program of their children. Parent and family involvement requires not only reorganization, but also training for parents and school personnel.

Funding

Funding for all schools needs to be equalized so a quality education can be provided for each and every child. It is necessary to fund research and development of model services, materials and curricula. There also needs to be financial support for training of professionals and parents and recruitment and retention of minorities at all service levels.

Issues Generated

Noted in the listing of the issues generated, as well as throughout other sections of the document, are many references made specifically relating to the Hispanic, American Indian, African-American and Asian/Pacific Island cultures. This grouping is in no way meant to imply a lack of recognition of the many subcultures within these four broad groups. In fact, the vast majority of issues are multicultural in nature.

Administration and Policy

What are the issues related to administration/policy that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Administration

- Schools need to become more adept at dealing with diversity, not just cultural diversity.
- Supportive organizational arrangements need to be developed in order to foster collaboration.
- Schools and community agencies must engage in collaborative efforts to meet the needs of all children.
- Greater interagency understanding of existing policies and procedures which affect the involvement of minority and underrepresented parents.
- Schools must guarantee equity in educational services and excellence in achievement for all children.
- Restructuring must include a diversity component.
- Schools need to define the term "minorities" more specifically. There are so-called minority groups who are affluent and integrated into the mainstream, maintaining their ethnic or cultural values, while still able to participate in and enjoy educational opportunities. "Minorities" who need to be helped are those with low incomes, often monolingual, on the fringe of their society.
- Systems must change and adapt, rather than expecting children and families to adapt to the system. Instead of blaming children and their families, or the culture, for failures, we must examine how the systems are failing children and families.

Policy

- Child care before and after school is needed. This does not have to be provided by the schools; may even be provided by the private sector in school buildings.
- School (extended day/years) scheduling needs more flexibility.
- Bilingual/multicultural special education policy emphasis needed.
- Black English issue needs research and policy direction.
- Adequate comprehensive policy and coordinated services for addressing involvement of minority and isolated parents of exceptional children are needed.
- Because of Union contracts/schedules/budget cuts/system inflexibility, professionals are not always available to attend "after hours" IEP meetings.

Attitudes and Bias

What are the issues related to personnel attitude and bias that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Cultural Bias

- Schools need to become more adept at dealing with diversity, not just cultural diversity.
- Cultural differences (e.g., language and social behaviors) are often viewed as deficits rather than differences, resulting in inappropriate and unsuccessful interventions.
- The culture and history of culturally different children often is not treated with respect and dignity in the schools.
- Need to correct the stereotype that all poor children come from dysfunctional families who are criminals, without self-respect, etc.
- Lack of skills in English is seen as a disability which results in a concomitant lowering of expectations for school achievement.
- Under- and overreferral to special educational services need correction.
- Asian model minority myth [stereotyping] needs correction.
- Recognize the different degrees of acculturation, the multi-faceted black culture, changing attitudes, etc.

Expectancy

- Teacher expectancies tend to be lower for culturally different students and negatively impact on the achievement and social development of these students.
- Educators need to be concerned about prior achievements of students which is influenced by the child's learning style, compared to the teacher's instructional style.
- Prior placement; placement rather than child's ability limits education opportunities.
- Data on social economic status of children in their class shows that if you are a free lunch student you don't stand a chance of getting an "A."
- Physical attraction of students; if you look good you get a good grade.
- Verbal ability; students who talk a lot get teacher approval.
- Race; children of a different race than the teacher.
- Over and underrepresentation of certain ethnic groups in programs for children with disabilities and gifted and talented.
- When children and youth act according to their cultural expectancy, they may exhibit behaviors considered to be atypical by nonmembers.
- Knowledge of specific Latin American cultures minimizes negative interpretations of culture-specific behavior.
- The issue is not expectancy, it is that people's minds are prejudice!
- Educators and other concerned citizens must realize that minority students such as African Americans and Hispanics and working-class students have the same potential to succeed in school as Euro-American middle and upper-class students. The schools are partially responsible for the fact that they often do not do so.
- Cultural differences result in Latin American children and youth being at-risk for academic, communication, and social problems.
- Educators must acknowledge that learning takes place within the context of one's culture (Sugai, 1988). With this perspective, educators must come to expect and accept differences in values, expectations and beliefs inherent to different cultures and modify curriculum instruction in order to make it more responsive to student diversity.

Sensitivity/Understanding

- There is a lack of sensitivity and awareness of cultural differences by school personnel (e.g., teachers, administrators, school board members, etc.).
- Greater sensitivity and understanding of culturally diverse families are needed to encourage involvement of minority and underrepresented parents.
- A single issue at this time confronting public education is an almost complete lack of understanding of the various Latin American cultures which exist and a grouping of Latin American cultures and individuals into the Mexican stereotype.

- The schools should move from a multicultural education approach which merely attempts to teach students to respect cultural diversity to an approach in which educators employ different cultural approaches to instruction, classroom management, counseling and assessment techniques with students from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

- There should be a recognition that while culturally diverse students have many experiences, values, beliefs and so on that differ from those of Euro-American students, there is a great diversity among different cultural groups. To be effective, educators require specific information about each of the cultural groups they work with.

- When recognizing the diversity within cultural groups, recognize that there is diversity within diversity. There runs the risk of stereotyping.

- There are many generalizations written about Indians by non-Indians.

- Educators must model acceptance of cultural differences.

- Special educators have to be aware of the learning styles of different cultures.

- In making placements, teachers must consider cultural and linguistic factors. Informative data about cultural diversities in teaching manuals must be demanded from text publishers (This is mandatory in the state of Florida).

- Dispelling of assumption that because members of a group (Mexican Americans) don't speak Spanish "as well" as other Latin-Americans, they are inferior to the Latin-Americans.

- All students are equal and should be treated that way.

TRAINING AND PERSONNEL

What are the issues related to personnel, staffing and training that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Training

- Staff training is a major issue.

- There is a need to emphasize and provide staff development to deal with issues in cultural diversity.

- Retention, training and professional development activities have for the most part been unrelated to issues of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic diversity. The overwhelming majority of service providers and leadership in public education tend to be Anglo-American, monolingual and English speaking. It is imperative that public education commit resources to the recruitment and retention of culturally diverse personnel. Such a commitment will greatly enhance the ability of public education to meet the education and support needs of children and families from diverse backgrounds.

- Too little attention is given in teacher preparation programs for the education of culturally/economically different students.
- The "culture" of homelessness needs to be understood by teachers and other service providers.
- Professionals need to understand the roles (father, mother, siblings, extended family members) played within family systems in nondominant cultures.
- Educators lack the competencies essential for the development of programs and materials appropriate for language minority students.
- Lack of trained personnel who understand limited English proficiency, second language acquisition or cultural characteristics which mediate learning.
- Knowledge of specific low incidence language groups and respective cultures and use of an advocacy-oriented assessment process.
- Availability of trained interpreters/interviewers in the assessment of language minority students.
- Lack of trained personnel to accommodate the diversity reflected in the student population.
- Preservice and inservice training must include pluralism.
- Special educators have to be aware of the learning styles of different cultures.
- Inservice for teachers, specialists and administrators.
- Higher education training models need more support.
- Teacher and teacher trainer scholarships are needed.
- Language interpreter training needs more emphasis.
- Few professionals have been trained in developing culturally relevant curricula and instructional materials.
- The overall development of children and youth, with and without disabilities, has been influenced by the uniqueness of the cultural group including anxieties, taboos, mores, aspirations, and behavioral patterns.
- Second language acquisition and ESL training needed for all professionals.
- Knowledge of Latin American child-rearing practices and parental expectations is essential to facilitate acculturation and learning.
- IHEs (Institutions of Higher Education) need to be preparing professionals for multicultural issues and teaching assignments in culturally diverse schools.
- Even though schools recognize the importance of involving parents in the educational process, few educators have had adequate skills and training in techniques and methods for effectively involving parents from diverse cultural backgrounds. They are unsure about how to address the problem and how to help parents in dealing with a potentially threatening and overwhelming environment.

- Few educators have had adequate skills and training in techniques and methods for effectively involving families, much less families from diverse cultural background.
- Emphasize the positive attributes of children who are fortunate enough to speak, read and write two languages.
- Insufficient information for school administrators is focused on meeting the educational needs of limited English proficient exceptional students.
- Too few special education service providers are trained to work with children with disabilities who have limited English proficiency.
- We will not serve the educational needs of culturally diverse students adequately until professors become model multicultural educators for their trainees to emulate.
- In depth training needed on major ethnic groups in the US.
- There is a lack of receptiveness of regular education teachers to the needs of minority children.
- Enable parents to teach/train administrators.

Recruitment/Retention

- There is a need to educate and retain more educators from diverse backgrounds.
- There is a need for an increased number of minority staff in a variety of disciplines (e.g., psychologists, speech pathologists, counselors, teachers, administrators, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.). It is important to have representatives of minority groups as service providers to ensure a sensitivity to cultural issues in educational settings and to provide role models for children from nondominant cultures.
- There is a tremendous turnover in personnel in many rural Indian reservations. Some providers who stay have been very effective, and have learned to work with Indian students. These providers have learned through more formal inservice and the students and the community. There is a need for more pretraining and inservice.
- More incentives are needed to attract and retain the best teachers and administrators to schools with culturally diverse populations.
- Areas to be listed for providing specific services include social work, community systems design, culturally sensitive programming and training.
- More and better utilization of paraprofessionals and community parent advocates.
- In depth training and follow up evaluation of paraprofessionals is necessary to ensure a high quality of service delivered to our children.
- Cultural diversity among faculty and staff must increase.
- Teacher training career ladders needed.
- State Departments need to hire bilingual staff.

- Regional training agencies like RRC, MRC need bilingual Special Education staff and/or staff with skills in working with children and families who have limited English proficiency or who are from nondominant cultures.

- Universities with high percentages of minority students who have been successful in recruiting, retaining, and graduating minority educators should be given priority funding for personnel preparation grants.

- Accrediting agencies, state departments of education, and the federal government should insist that universities that prepare personnel for schools include multicultural competencies in their programs.

- There is a need to recruit and use cultural informants who can identify cultural and linguistic difference that effect positive learning outcomes.

Curriculum and Instruction

What are the issues related to curriculum and instruction that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Instructional Methods

- A major change in curriculum and methodology is needed.

- Disadvantaged schools that are predominantly minority were found to be less likely to use "hands-on or higher-order learning instructional methods and were less likely to offer as much opportunity to explore fine arts, practical and life skills, and other enriching curriculum areas" (MacIver & Epstein, 1990).

- Educators must identify preferred teaching and learning styles which are culture specific.

- Research supports the existence of different learning styles and patterns of communication, especially among bilingual students. A lack of awareness of the inability of the majority culture leadership to address differences in learning styles has resulted in the overrepresentation of children from diverse populations in special education programs. The framework of public education must reinforce the use of a variety of teaching techniques to accommodate differences in learning styles and maximize strengths exhibited in different styles.

- Use appropriate technology (i.e., technology that enhances educational outcomes).

- Use mentorships so that each child is able to develop a relationship with an adult.

- Cooperative learning curriculum emphasis needed.

- Native language use needed for instruction.

- Educators must acknowledge that learning takes place within the context of one's culture (Sugai, 1988). With this perspective, educators must come to expect and accept differences in values, expectations and beliefs inherent to different cultures and modify curriculum instruction in order to make it more responsive to student diversity.

- Educators must select instructional materials which reflect cultural diversity.

- Educators must match teaching and learning activities with cultural preferences and behavioral norms.

- Provide developmentally appropriate practices in the classrooms for the Limited English Proficient students.

- Non-English speaking students need to develop both academic and social language skills and self-concept.

- Pride in their race, pride in their peer groups (basketball player, singer, dancer).

- Develop a collaborative/mentor-team approach for teachers in working with these students.

- Lack of instructional practices known to be effective with language minority students.

Development of Materials/Models

- Research incentives are needed for the study and replication of successful examples of educating culturally diverse populations.

- Few professionals have been trained in developing culturally relevant curricula and instructional materials, including appropriate testing/evaluating materials for specific minority groups.

- Bilingual special education best practices research needed.

- Black English issue needs research and policy direction.

- Culturally different children often do not see themselves represented positively in the curriculum.

- Asian American culture is misrepresented in textbooks and these children's linguistic, educational and emotional needs are being ignored.

- There is a critical need to find more successful ways to educate and retain African-American and Hispanic males in schools.

- There is a need to institutionalize a curriculum in multicultural education which includes assessment, home-school linkages, learning styles, and developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom.

- Need to disseminate the latest research on bilingual education studies and strategies (i.e., contact Multicultural Education, Education and Advocacy, Inc., META, in California or Florida).

- [Develop/]select reading materials that relate to the student's <u>own</u> environment.

Delivery of Services

- Schools must guarantee equity in educational services and excellence in achievement for all children.
- Provide quality preschool services so no student begins school without the proper background (quality services based on Piagetian framework that assist the young child to develop a positive attitude toward learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum, i.e., High Scope Program).
- As far as possible students receiving services need to be maintained in the community in which they reside.
- When culturally diverse students are mainstreamed, there is a danger in using ability grouping in the regular classroom.
- School day/year scheduling needs more flexibility and sensitivity to cultural days such as excused days off for Native American activities and ceremonies.
- More emphasis on collaboration with regular and bilingual education.
- Academic self-image (educators are not addressing this part) a lot of work is being done on self-image but not academic self-image. It is important to emphasize the self-worth of every student, while at the same time emphasizing the student's educational success.
- Culturally pluralistic learning environments are needed.
- More appropriate language acquisition environments are needed.
- Reservation Indian and rural Hispanic migrant need extra help. For example, Indians moving to urban settings will need help in adjusting to the new environment.
- Learning may be less than optimal if educators are insensitive to cultural and behavioral styles.
- Culturally diverse children and youth need time to acculturate to educational norms.

ASSESSMENT

What are the issues related to assessment that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Identification/Assessment

- Disproportionate amount of African Americans, American Indians and Hispanic students are referred for behavior/communication and learning problems (overrepresentation).

- Over and underrepresentation of certain ethnic groups in programs for children with disabilities and gifted and talented.
- Bias in tests results in misidentification of children from minority backgrounds as disabled.
- Diagnosis and referral services need to assure a comprehensive approach so that there is proper identification of children from minority backgrounds.
- There are no defined measures to determine who is considered Limited English Proficient and how to address the potential language difficulties of students who speak English proficiently at school, but only hear a second language spoken outside of school.
- Diagnostic placements needed under IDEA.
- Diagnosis and assessment. Issues related to appropriate placement and instruction. The overreliance on norm-referenced instruments and medical model, use of unfamiliar clinicians, tendency to misperceive cultural behaviors, etc.
- There are an insufficient number of assessment tools normed for specific cultural populations.
- Alternate assessment models needed, with separate models for specific minority groups.
- Informal dynamic student assessment needs more emphasis.
- The relationship between degree of acculturation and adjustment to educational setting.
- Availability of trained interpreters/interviewers in the assessment of language minority students.
- Alternative assessment practices for language minority students.
- Knowledge of specific low incidence language groups and respective cultures and use of an advocacy-oriented assessment process.
- Nonbiased assessment including prereferral strategies.
- Assessment must be geared toward a more holistic and nonbiased approach. Implementation of such methods will result in more effective assessment and instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students.
- For special education, developing appropriate tests which can accurately access the level of achievement and abilities of limited English proficient students.
- There is a need for an outcome orientation. What is it that students are able to achieve? Once the outcomes are identified, how can achievement be measured other than with just tests? Teachers are required to state the behavioral objectives for the students' assessment and instruction. The objectives must state the expected performance, criterion for mastery and the materials, testing instruments used to measure the target instructional behaviors.

Society and Community

What are the community and societal issues that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Agency Collaboration

- It is necessary for parents, educators, administrators, health and social agency professionals to collaborate if all students are to achieve their individual education goals.
- Professionals and administrators should initiate and extend collaboration with parents.
- Supportive organizational arrangements need to be developed in order to foster collaboration.
- Schools and community agencies must engage in collaborative efforts to meet the needs of all children.
- Creating a collaborative model which can incorporate the knowledge and skills of teachers, psychologists, community agents and others.

Needed Services

- There is a critical need for transition services for all culturally diverse students, particularly males.
- Provide child care before and after school. This does not have to be provided by the schools; may even be provided by the private sector in school buildings.
- Provide health services to all children. Agencies must work together with partnerships and consensus.
- Areas to be listed for providing specific services include social work, community systems design, culturally sensitive programming and training.
- A need to find ways to met the parents' basic needs before dealing with educational needs of the children (i.e., help the homeless, the "hard-to-reach" parent). Provide referral to assisting agencies.
- Provide social and health services at community schools.

Community View

- The citizens of the United States are not committed to providing a quality education to children from minority backgrounds.
- Black, Latino and poor children have consistently been neglected in our schools. A national education strategy is needed to improve educational achievements of all children with these children at its center.
- There is currently no national commitment to public education.

- Shift from this being a family responsibility to the community taking care of the needs of all children living there.

- Work together with the community; begin with a business partnership. These issues are not just the responsibility of the schools. It is a much larger issue and we should focus all community resources on meeting the needs of children. There needs to be collaborative efforts involving schools, business, and agencies.

- There needs to be both a public and private mix in providing services.

- One needs a diversified school board.

- The issues that affect culturally diverse populations are not limited to education and school alone but fall within the larger social spectrum of issues, for example, poverty, living conditions, family structure, health conditions.

- There is a critical need to make public education more meaningful and to establish an obvious connection between public school education and postsecondary success.

- A single issue at this time confronting public education is an almost complete lack of understanding of the various Latin American cultures which exist and a grouping of Latin American cultures and individuals into the Mexican stereotype.

- Lack of recognition that the community needs may be different (and no less valuable) than academic needs.

- Not only issues of specific ethnic groups, but also issues on how long the student/family has lived in the United States need addressing. For example, students of an ethnic group who have resided in Hawaii for three generations have different values and behavior than students of the same ethnic group who have just come to the Islands.

- The socioeconomic status of the family is another salient variable to consider when examining issues of ethnic groups in public schools.

- Minority populations are more likely to be programmed into punishment facilities such as juvenile court.

- Changing demographics.

- Environmental factors which affect this population:

    - low socioeconomic status
    - breakdown of family unit
    - stressors associated with culture of poverty
    - drugs
    - lack of English proficiency skills

PARENTS AND FAMILIES

What are the issues related to parents and families that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Involvement

- Parent involvement and family education must be stressed.
- Culturally diverse parents are uniquely underinvolved in the education of their children, (i.e., less likely to provide home-based learning activities, to participate in school and to become involved in the IEP process).
- Services and placement should be family-driven not institution-driven.
- Lack of parental involvement and/or opportunities for parent empowerment.
- Lack of shared decision making by all parties (parents/families, teachers and students)
- Don't devalue parents who are not willing/able to be involved at that time.
- Do more to provide parents with the means or incentive to attend meetings (i.e., babysitters, food, transportation, meeting times, length of travel for those living in rural areas or the reservation).
- Need to include parents on program evaluation teams.
- Use visual reminders to truely welcome parents and children into the schools (i.e., banners across the entry of a school, written in different languages).
- Find ways to bring parents into the schools and roll out the "red carpet" for them.
- Get to know the parent/family home environment (home visits, social activities).
- A room should be set aside in the schools for parent use (e.g., Parent Center).
- There must be a leader for minority parents. This is where the representation plays a major role.
- Family involvement is a necessity, not a luxury. Benefits of parent involvement in relation to success in school have been clearly established in research studies.

Parent Training

- Parents need encouragement and training in order to become full participants in the education of their children.
- Ask about services and needs and then provide parent education.
- Informed parents make a positive difference.
- Go through the effort to ask parents what they need (parent needs assessment).

- Lack of parent information programs for decision making, parent advocacy and knowledge about special education.
- Parent and community involvement/training needed.
- Effective use of training materials, as well as identification of new training materials, is needed.
- As a direct consequence of acculturation, Latin American children and youth are at-risk in the home environment.
- All communications (announcements, notices, materials, etc.) to parents must be translated into the needed languages.
- Disabilities are perceived differently by specific cultural groups.
- Many Indian children have attended schools away from home in BIA boarding schools and parents are not involved with their children's education. Although there are fewer boarding schools now, many parents must now redefine their roles in the education of their children.
- Training materials are not always appropriate in terms of training methods for specific minority groups and different training styles.

Professional Role/Needs

- Professionals need to be committed to enhancing a collaborative relationship with families.
- The importance of family support to the educational process is indisputable. Therefore, public education of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds must include a commitment to encourage participation from parents in the educational process and to allow that participation to occur within the comfort levels of cultural norms and personal competence; the opportunity for educators to rethink notions of what constitutes involvement and to capitalize on the type of involvement preferred by individual families; the development of avenues of communication and collaboration with families in order to provide relevant programming.
- Professionals need to understand the roles (father, mother, siblings, extended family members) played within family systems in nondominant cultures.
- Greater sensitivity and understanding of culturally diverse families are needed to encourage involvement of minority and underrepresented parents.
- Professionals need to be sensitive to the "silent period" that occurs during the acculturation of families from diverse cultures. This "silent period" is often interpreted as nonparticipation. Provide visiting teachers that are sensitive to the cultures of those parents. Professionals need to recognize that other relationships are of equal importance (i.e., clan relationships in American Indian people with children placed with other than their biological parents).

FUNDING

What are the issues related to funding that must be addressed to provide an education to children and youth from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Public Schools

- There is a critical need to increase/equalize the per pupil expenditures for disadvantaged schools compared to advantaged schools.
- Culturally diverse (African-American and Hispanic) children are more likely to attend disadvantaged schools.
- Collaborative funding sources/foundations must be sought, established.
- The Indian schools are intensely overcrowded and in deplorable, rundown condition. The obstacles that face Indian youngsters must be removed so they can receive a quality education.

Higher Education

- Higher education training models need more support.
- Since many university professors do not have the training or experience to provide multicultural educational services, state and federal government departments of education should place the highest priority on funding programs designed to improve professors' competencies in these areas.
- Universities with high percentages of minority students who have been successful in recruiting, retaining, and graduating minority educators should be given priority funding for personnel preparation grants.
- Many minority students lack the ability to adapt to the college environment but have academic ability and this can affect dropout rates.

Parent Training and Outreach

- Adequate funding for implementing parent training/outreach programs throughout the child's school years is needed.
- Provide funding for school liasons who have the ability to establish a direct connection with students, family and community.

Recruitment/Retention and Training

- It is imperative that public education commit resources to the recruitment and retention of culturally diverse personnel. Such a commitment will greatly enhance the ability of public education to meet the education and support needs of children and families from diverse backgrounds.
- Teacher and teacher trainer scholarships are needed.

Appropriate Materials

- When it appears that commercial publishers will not prepare or even publish culturally appropriate materials because of a lack of potential profit, the federal government should fund such projects.

- Providing more money for computers and software which can enhance learning.

Additional thoughts

Our Changing Population

Today, the United States of America is more racially and ethnically diverse than at any time in its history. Schools are educating increasing numbers of students who speak a language other than English. But, many schools have failed to respond quickly and adequately in recognizing that the demographics of the student population has changed dramatically. See Appendix A for a chart of population diversity state by state.

In addition to the issues of cultural diversity and a changing school population, we must also acknowledge and address the social context in which children live if we are to provide a free appropriate education for all children. More than ever before in our country's history, children are living in poverty and unsafe neighborhoods, being raised in single-parent families and by teenage mothers, exposed to drugs, and lacking appropriate prenatal and basic health care. These circumstances go beyond what families or agencies working in isolation can solve. Only through the collaboration of families, communities, and human services can we even begin to meet the needs of our nation's children.

Despite these complex problems, certain common elements have been identified in successful educational programs aimed at meeting the needs of all children. One of these common success factors is having high expectations and a clear vision of what we want to achieve. Strong leadership must be coupled with teamwork and joint efforts by all involved. The competencies of the personnel must be guaranteed through comprehensive and continuing staff development. A strong, appropriate curriculum must be provided in a safe, clean, orderly learning environment. There must be genuine accountability for the outcomes of education and strong community and parental support and involvement. And lastly, parents, children, and educational professionals must receive recognition and reward for excellence (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1991).

Description of Data Collection

This document is a collection of issues pertinent to the concerns of professionals, practitioners, parents and families of school age children and youth with and without disabilities. An extensive effort was undertaken on the part of FRRC staff to ensure that informed people were involved, that respondents represented culturally diverse or minority groups and that as many issues as possible could be documented within the timeframe of the activity. The following describes the methods used to collect the data and characteristics of the respondents involved.

Method of Data Collection

The data collected and the individuals involved were initially identified by peers through a nomination process. The first set of nominees were identified after discussions with the Office of Special Education Programs, national leaders, federal agencies and professional organizations. The first round of names, began a series of contacts to some 70 individuals with a response rate of over one half. Individuals provided autobiographical information including data on professional affiliations, ethnic/racial background, job experiences, ethnic group experience, and categories of expertise. An electronic database was then created to profile the respondents and to ensure that input came from a diverse and representative group of individuals. Once an individual's name entered the database, a second round of data collection occurred. (See Appendix B for forms used in data collection.) At that time, identified individuals were asked (through letter or telephone interview) to respond to the following questions.

1. From your perspective what are the major issues facing *public education* in meeting the needs of a culturally diverse school population?
2. Are there additional issues that need to be addressed by *special education* in meeting the needs of culturally diverse students with disabilities?
3. Are there educational issues related to *specific ethnic groups* that must be addressed?

Response to these questions resulted in some 216 points of concern or what were determined to be key issues to educating students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The remarks were sorted to eliminate redundancy. Additionally, issues addressed at a recent national conference of parents and

educators who have successfully crossed cultural barriers were incorporated into the document (The conference was entitled "The Sante Fe Summit" sponsored by the Regional Resource Centers network and the Technical Assistance for Parent Programs). Finally, information taken from the current literature was added to the list of issues. These data were collapsed and categorized into a draft document which was reviewed by a subcommittee of 21 individuals drawn from the master list of respondents.

The final phase of the project includes validation, ranking of the issues, refinement and expansion of the document, distribution and follow-up activities. It is hoped that the information is relevant and reaches those individuals in need, and that time permits us to take the data to the next level which is to offer strategies and promising practices in an effort to match problems to resource people and solutions.

Respondent Profile

The pool of participants in this project represent all major ethnic groups including African Americans (38%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (17%), Hispanics (21%), Native American Indians (14%), and other (10%). Additionally, respondents wrote in the specific cultural groups of Euroamerican, Puerto Rican, Chicana, Japanese, Slovak, and Filipino.

In terms of the range of work experiences and job titles held by the respondents, there appears to be a good split of researchers, administrators, and practitioners. Specifically, the questionaire asked that participants "categorize themselves into professions." The breakdown by profession is 17 higher education personnel, nine (9) school district personnel, seven (7) parent representatives, four (4) state level personnel, and six (6) listed as other. Many of the respondents listed a job title as well as indicated that they were a parent of a child with a disability. Over one half of the nominees contributed at local/district, state or regional levels. Example job titles included principal, teacher, professor, supererintendent, director, state/local coordinator, consultant, parent training specialist, school psychologist/related service provider, administrator and others.

Some 57 professional organizations were listed by respondents. These national, state and local groups represented special education, administration, curriculum, research, minority concerns,

supervision, human services, policy and legal issues, and culturally specific organizations. Among the more frequently listed affiliations were: Council of Exceptional Children (CEC), American Educational and Research Association (AERA), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Phi Delta Kappa, and National Association of Black Educators (NABE). From this type of biographical information on the respondents, there appears to be a good representation of professional organizations reflected in the pool of candidates involved in the project.

When asked about experience in working with students from diverse backgrounds, respondents noted experience in working with all of the basic ethnic groups. It was common for an individual to list all or more than one ethnic group as the focus of their professional activities. Beyond the broad ethnic groups, additions included White, Portuguese, French Creole, cultural diversity in general, and transcultural concerns.

In terms of who the respondents served, responses included children and youth of all ages from infants to post secondary, as well as college age students, professionals (including teachers and administrators), parents and families. Other entries included vocational rehabilitation project personnel, private sector companies and agencies, community organizations, and state education agencies.

Lastly, the participant profile covers a range of issues relevant to the topic of reaching children and youth who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Nine issues in particular were offered to establish a range of topics including *at-risk, bilingual, urban, personnel preparation, assessment, inner city, rural, regular education, and recruitment/retention.* For the most part, the responses fell evenly across the categories, offering further insight into the issues involved in serving students from culturally, linguistically and racially diverse backgrounds. For a listing of the resource pool organized by issue, see the following pages in this document. It is hoped that the list of names will prove beneficial to anyone needing more information at a practical/problem solving level.

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Philip Chinn
Nancy Cloud
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Robert Davila
Ingrid Draper
Rita Esquivel
Norma Ewing
Debra Garcia
Shernaz Garcia
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Herb Grossman
Janice Hale
Maggie Hanohano
Marigold Hardesty
John Harris III
Roger F. Harris
Teresa Hernandez
Asa Hillard
Betty Hobbs
Norma C. Iribarren
George Joe
Marilyn Johnson
Martha Johnson
Reginald Jones
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M. Keller
Margie Kitano
Crystal Kuykendall
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American Indian

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Debra Merchant
Bruce Ramirez
Francisca Sanchez
Terry Tafoya

Asian/Pacific Islander

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Maggie Hanohano
Roger F. Harris
Norma C. Iribarren
George Joe
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Mona Amy Moikeha
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Hispanic

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Shernaz Garcia
Billie Jean Gray
Herb Grossman
Rogger F. Harris
Teresa Hernandez
Betty Hobbs
Norma Iribarren
Crystal Kuykendall
Donna Lashus
Elba Maldonado-Colon
Georgia McMurray
Debra Merchant
Beatriz Mitchell
Alicia Paredes Scribner
Bruce Ramirez
Francisca Sanchez
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"What issues are you involved with?"

At-Risk

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Betty Hobbs
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Esther Leung
Elba Maldonado-Colon
Rosalind Mau
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George Joe
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Donna Lashus
Esther Leung
Elba Maldonado-Colon
Rosalind Mau
Jacqueline L. Mault
Georgia McMurray
Debra Merchant
Beatriz Mitchell
Mona Amy Moikeha
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Urban

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Personnel

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Inner City

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Rural

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Martha Johnson
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Regular Education

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APPENDIX A

Diversity state by state

Diversity state by state: New Mexico to Vermont

New Mexico – with its large percentages of Native American and Hispanics – is the nation's most diverse state. New Mexico's Diversity Index is 60, which means there's a 60% chance that any two randomly selected New Mexicans are different either racially or ethnically. How the states compare on the Diversity Index, listed from most diverse to least.

State	Index 1990	Racial[1]/ethnic[2] breakdown Pct. White	Pct. Black	Pct. Asian	Pct. Indian	Pct. Hispanic
New Mexico	60	75.6	2.0	0.93	8.87	38.23
California	59	69.0	7.4	9.56	0.81	25.83
Hawaii	56	33.4	2.5	61.83	0.46	7.34
Texas	55	75.2	11.9	1.88	0.39	25.55
D.C.	51	29.6	65.8	1.85	0.24	5.39
New York	49	74.4	15.9	3.86	0.35	12.31
Mississippi	48	63.5	35.6	0.51	0.33	0.62
Louisiana	47	67.3	30.8	0.97	0.44	2.20
Maryland	45	71.0	24.9	2.92	0.27	2.62
Arizona	45	80.9	3.0	1.51	5.55	18.78
South Carolina	44	69.0	29.8	0.64	0.24	0.88
Georgia	43	71.0	27.0	1.17	0.21	1.68
Alaska	43	75.5	4.1	3.59	15.58	3.24
New Jersey	42	79.3	13.4	3.53	0.19	9.57
Florida	42	83.1	13.6	1.19	0.28	12.17
Illinois	41	78.3	14.8	2.50	0.19	7.91
Alabama	40	73.7	25.2	0.54	0.41	0.61
North Carolina	39	75.6	22.0	0.79	1.21	1.16
Virginia	38	77.4	18.8	2.57	0.25	2.59
Nevada	36	84.3	6.6	3.17	1.63	10.35
Delaware	34	80.3	16.9	1.36	0.30	2.37
Oklahoma	33	82.1	7.4	1.07	8.03	2.74
Colorado	33	88.2	4.0	1.82	0.84	12.88
Michigan	30	83.4	13.9	1.13	0.60	2.17
Arkansas	30	82.7	15.9	0.53	0.54	0.85
Tennessee	29	83.0	16.0	0.65	0.21	0.67
Connecticut	29	87.0	8.3	1.54	0.20	6.48
Washington	24	88.5	3.1	4.33	1.67	4.41
Missouri	23	87.7	10.7	0.81	0.39	1.21
Ohio	23	87.8	10.7	0.84	0.19	1.29
Massachusetts	22	89.8	5.0	2.38	0.20	4.78
Pennsylvania	22	88.5	9.2	1.16	0.12	1.95
Kansas	21	90.1	5.8	1.28	0.89	3.78
Rhode Island	20	91.4	3.9	1.83	0.41	4.56
Indiana	19	90.6	7.8	0.68	0.23	1.78
Oregon	17	92.8	1.6	2.44	1.35	3.96
Wyoming	17	94.2	0.8	0.62	2.09	5.68
Utah	17	93.8	0.7	1.94	1.41	4.91
South Dakota	16	91.6	0.5	0.45	7.27	0.76
Wisconsin	16	92.3	5.0	1.09	0.81	1.90
Kentucky	15	92.0	7.1	0.48	0.16	0.60
Montana	15	92.8	0.3	0.53	5.97	1.52
Idaho	15	94.4	0.3	0.93	1.37	5.26
Nebraska	14	93.8	3.6	0.79	0.79	2.34
Minnesota	12	94.4	2.2	1.78	1.14	1.23
North Dakota	11	94.6	0.6	0.54	4.06	0.73
West Virginia	8	96.2	3.1	0.42	0.14	0.47
Iowa	8	96.6	1.7	0.92	0.27	1.18
New Hampshire	5	98.0	0.6	0.84	0.19	1.02
Maine	4	98.4	0.4	0.54	0.49	0.56
Vermont	4	98.6	0.4	0.57	0.30	0.65

1 – "Other" category omitted; 2 – Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race
Source: USA TODAY Diversity Index developed from Census statistics by Philip Meyer

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APPENDIX B

Forms used in data collection

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Directions: Please complete the items below. Some of the information will be used to balance the pool of resource people.

NAME: _____

TITLE/AFFILIATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

_____

_____

PHONE: _____

FAX NUMBER: _____

SPECIALNET USER ID: _____

YOUR ETHNICITY (optional): _____

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS: _____

_____

_____

FOCUS OF YOUR EXPERTISE

The next four questions are aimed at determining the focus of your work. Check one or more of the suggested responses or specify others.

Are you a . . .? (Check all that apply.)

___Local Special Education Director
___State Special Education Director
___Parent of a child with a disability
___Related Service Provider
___University Professor/Researcher
___Professional Organization Administrator
___Teacher
___Building Level Principal

___Other, specify _____

Which ethnic group is the focus of your work? (Check all that apply.)

___African/Black American
___American Indian/Alaskan Native
___Hispanic
___Asian/Pacific Islander

___Other, specify _____

Who do you serve/teach? (Check all that apply.)

___Infants/Toddlers
___Preschoolers
___Elementary Students
___Secondary Students
___Post-secondary Students
___College Students
___Professionals
___Parents/Families

___Other, specify _____

What issues are you involved with? (Check all that apply.)

___At-Risk
___Bilingual
___Urban
___Personnel Preparation
___Assessment
___Inner City
___Rural
___Regular Education
___Recruitment/Retention

___Other, specify _____

MAY WE INCLUDE YOUR NAME IN OUR DATABASE OF LEADERS IN THE FIELD TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS?

___Yes ___No

NOMINATION FORM

Please offer the names, addresses, and telephone numbers, of individuals you feel would be appropriate to involve in this project. As stated previously, the list of resource people will be validated and distributed to RRCs and other organizations requesting information in the area of educating culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities. Once we have received your nominees, we will send a follow-up letter, such as the one you have received here. Use the format below if it is helpful in making nominations. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

NAME: _____

TITLE/AFFILIATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

_____

_____

PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

TITLE/AFFILIATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

_____

_____

PHONE: _____

(Feel free to copy this from as needed.)